

The Elementary English Review

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THE COMIC BOOKS AGAIN

DAVID T. ARMSTRONG

SOME FALL CHILDREN'S

BOOKS

IRENE GELTCH

IRENE B. MELOY

STUDYING A RETARDED

READER

KATE V. WOFFORD

IMPROVING CHILDREN'S

LETTERS

LENA WEST

A VITAL LANGUAGE PROGRAM

HANNAH M. LINDAHL

CHILDREN WRITE POETRY

ANN STANFORD

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

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THE ELEMENTARY ENGLISH REVIEW

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No. 8

How Good Are the Comic Books?

DAVID T. ARMSTRONG¹

"The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light."

As teachers we have probably been excellent salesmen for comic books because by putting them on the Index Expurgatorius we have given them the holy sanction with which "Verboten" enhalos literature. Surveys of the popularity of comic books show that over 90% of boys and girls in the age group 8-15 read them regularly. From 17 on a proportionately smaller percentage of pupils read them. This is attributed to the fact that the material is on the child level. Post-war plans in this branch of the graphic arts will involve exploration into the adult market by supplying material on a level sufficiently intriguing and exciting to captivate the attention.

As a teacher I have always been against the comic books. Why? Because they portrayed wild fantasy, used objectionable slang, contributed nothing permanent to the mental development of the reader, used up valuable

time that might more profitably be spent on better literature, and because such "trash" vitiated the mental and moral taste buds for the great literature of all time.

All this I have taught my students with all the enthusiasm I can command. I have told parents at P. T. A. groups and Child Study groups that while they carefully hide the matches which would do their children's physical bodies great harm, they give them mental dynamite in permitting them to feed their minds upon comic book literature. My most telling argument has been the analogy that even as a stream with iron in solution will color the pebbles on the bottom a dark brown, and a stream with copper in solution will coat the pebbles green, and a stream with gold in solution will gild the pebbles; so, whatever is in solution in the stream that runs through our minds will color the residue that remains. Therefore, let us give our children only the best.

¹Head of the English department of the Emerson High School, Union City, New Jersey.

Of late I have begun to wonder. Recently in a spirit of fairness I bought the Fall No. 22 issue of *All Star Comics*, a Superman Publication, for ten cents. I bought it to read and I read it. I read it because a youngster challenged me to read it. I had been arguing that many Bible enemies criticize the book at second hand or from an old impression, adding that if they took the trouble to read carefully there would be less prejudiced opposition to the Bible as a piece of literature. In such a context when I was asked to examine a comic book, I morally had to comply, even though it had nothing to do with the argument I was making. The youngster simply wisely used a feather that had dropped from my wing to guide his arrow to its mark.

I was surprised at what I discovered in the book I read. I selected a Superman comic because he had been my main target. I discovered that the editorial advisory board for Superman Comic Magazines is an imposing array of well known educators and public figures. I discovered a Superman reading list reviewed by a consultant on children's reading of the Child Study Association of America. Superman's reading list might be more acceptable to my students than my reading list would be. If all of the books were of the quality of John R. Tunis' *Keystone Kids* (the book recommended in the comic book I read), I should approve a Superman reading list for my students.

The main part of this comic book dealt with a meeting of the Justice Society of America, the members of which are Hawkman, Starman, Johnny Thunder, Atom, Dr. Mid-Nite, and The Spectre. As a preface to the problem of this issue is the following fable:

There once dwelt on earth certain beings called men, but men were always finding fault with each other for many

reasons . . . like differences of race and color and creed; so they began to kill each other off. When they killed a lot of people they called it a *war* . . . when only a few died, it was a *persecution*.

Eventually, only two men were left on earth, a tall man and a short one. Now the tall man hated the short man because he was short, and the short man hated the tall man because he was tall. So the tall man took a gun and shot the short man. Then the victor picked up his cup to take a drink but the other had poisoned his drink! Of course the tall man didn't know this, so he drank very deeply . . . *and then there were no men on earth!*

You think this is just a fable, don't you? Remember this . . . if hatred and intolerance are allowed to run rampant, the world may some day reach just such an impasse. And it was this knowledge that led the JUSTICE SOCIETY into their strangest adventure, "THE TEST OF TIME!"

Each of the members of the Justice Society is projected into a bygone historical era and each solves a crucial problem in *understanding*. The various adventures of the chief actors concern understanding of the fact that slaves are human beings, that witches are misunderstood human beings, that all men are brothers, and that inventors do not deprive men of jobs, but in reality create more jobs for more people.

One of the spectators objects, "But lots of people don't take the trouble to understand others, Dr. Mid-Nite."

Dr. Mid-Nite, "Then we'll have to make them understand, Sonny, by educating them."

One of the interludes between the adventures is a picture story of the long run by Pheidippides. Unfortunately he is called Philippides. There is a prose Hop Harrigan story about an attack on a secret Jap air base. It's in the Jules Verne manner and well calculated to arouse and hold the imagination.

The facts are not correct in every instance. For example, slaves did not fight at Thermopylae, nor are motors driven by electromotive power. But these are minor considerations. Better and more careful editing will eliminate errors of taste, fact, and judgment, and improve the quality of the comic books.

On the credit side of the ledger a fair appraisal must concede these points:

1. The vocabulary is on a high level. Without making any search I underscored the following words and phrases on my first reading of the comic book: *impasse, rampant, miscreant, supply dump, coincidence, ruefully, conceivably, in the 17th century witches were as much a cause of fear as a ten ton block buster today, prejudice, intolerance, Stygian darkness, and nether world*. These are words I want my students to come across, to use, and to learn how to use.

2. This type of reading encourages reading and increases reading speed. I am a rapid reader. I just stumbled upon it because when I was learning to read we had no reading speeds, metronoscopes, regressions, fixations, etc. I read the pulps and my keen interest in learning how things came out naturally stimulated me to read fast. If the comic books will encourage reading, the urge to see how the story comes out will take care of speed in many cases.

3. The values that are being stressed in the issue of the comic book I read are wholesome. The last page in the book is a high school assembly scene with the chief actors in the drama on the stage set against a backdrop of an American flag, all saying, "I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, ONE NATION INDIVISIBLE WITH LIBERTY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL!" In an inset in one corner is Wonder Woman add-

ing, "You know what that means, 'Liberty and justice for all'—ALL, regardless of race, color or religion!" This is good.

4. The comic books are reaching and intriguing a large audience. A large part of this audience is school children. Some investigations show that it is the child who is not doing too well in school who reads comic books most avidly. As school teachers we are vitally concerned with this type of youngster because he needs as much education as he has capacity to absorb.

By and large at the present time we are not teaching this type of youngster much. Our textbooks and our classroom procedures are above him. He comes to us because he has to, but he reads his comic books because he wants to. While we have floundered around seeking ways and means to interest him and motivate him, he has found something to his liking. Our punishments, our remonstrances, our strategies have all been in vain. The youngster's attachment to his comic books remains. It is for this reason that I suggest that the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light.

Whether we can and whether we should make the comic books an adjunct to the classroom is a moot question. The appearance of True Comics is a tacit acknowledgement of the popularity and appeal of comics as an educational device. The experiment with Superman in the schools of Lynn, Massachusetts, is a notable first in this field. We cannot now ignore them any more than we can ignore the movies or the radio as modern educational devices.

Personally, I should not care to bring the comics to the classroom wholesale, but at the same time I have no objection to alluding indirectly or even referring outright to Wonder Woman, Mandrake the Magician,

Vitalizing The Language Program

HANNAH M. LINDAHL¹

How can the elementary school chart a program in which the learning of language has as much reality to children as does their use of language outside the classroom? It can be done only by examining the language needs of children and by drawing upon their interests and experiences to satisfy their needs for language. Children have much to tell, to ask, to discuss, and to write about if they are led to feel that their experiences, their questions, their plans, and their records are worthwhile.

In observing children outside the classroom we readily note that they are constantly exchanging information and ideas. They tell each other about movies that they have seen, about radio programs that they have heard, about books and comic strips that they have read, about interesting or unusual things that they have seen, and about both pleasant and unpleasant experiences that they have had. They tell each other how to play games, how to make things, and how to take care of pets. They are curious about their surroundings and they ask each other questions; they share information that contributes to the answering of their questions. They talk freely and spontaneously; they are informal and animated. Yet sometimes in the classroom these same children, who have much to talk about outside the classroom, become uncommunicative and unresponsive. In the atmosphere of the classroom they sometimes undergo a metamorphosis that is unfavorable to the learning of language. Where this condition exists, we should be sufficiently aroused and perturbed to ask: How can we transfer the children's

vitalized use of language outside the classroom into the classroom?

It is obvious that the answer to the foregoing question is not to be found in a stiff, formal language program, but rather in a program that makes constant use of the children's interests, activities, and experiences. If the children are given many meaningful opportunities to use oral language in the classroom, naturalness will characterize the program. An atmosphere of naturalness will help the children to develop a sense of security in social situations requiring the use of the spoken word. Without a sense of security the children will not talk freely and spontaneously.

There are so many needs for the living use of oral language in the classroom that no child should have an impoverished oral language program. There will always be much need for relating personal experiences, for participating in group discussions, for contributing to group planning, for evaluating group endeavor, for giving directions, for using the telephone, for making announcements, for giving reports, for making introductions, and for telling stories. By making use of these purposeful situations requiring the use of the spoken word, the teacher will be able to provide the children with a vitalized, functional program in oral language.

The relating of personal experiences is one of the most satisfying uses of oral language. If the teacher shows genuine interest in the

¹Supervisor of elementary education in the Mishawaka, Ind., schools.

personal experiences of the children, and if she creates a pleasant, natural atmosphere, she can inspire the children to want to share their experiences with others and to feel a sense of security as they face an audience.

In democratic, cooperative living in adult life there is much need for group planning and group discussion. In democratic, cooperative living in the classroom the same need is present. Social adjustment, the ability to work cooperatively and harmoniously with a group, and the habit of giving courteous consideration to the rights and opinions of others are desirable aims of child development to which the language program can richly contribute. Presenting plans to the teacher or to the group, participating in a discussion of planned group endeavor, and evaluating the completed group project offer unlimited possibilities for a functional program in oral language.

The correct observance of social amenities in oral language is another channel through which the language program can make a vital contribution to effective, happy living. Using the telephone, making and acknowledging introductions, giving directions, and making announcements are some of the life situations with which all individuals are quite frequently confronted. If children are provided with meaningful opportunities for early training in these uses of language, they will be able to perform these social acts with ease, grace, and correctness.

Although life's needs for oral language are greater in number than the needs for written language, every individual will have many experiences in life which will require him to use written language. He cannot always communicate by means of the spoken word. There will be many life situations in which he must depend upon the written word for expressing his thoughts and feelings. Therefore, activi-

ties in written language become an integral part of the language program.

How can the classroom activities in written language be made meaningful to the child? The answer is the same as that given to a similar question concerning activities in oral language. Only by making use of practical situations in which the child has a functional use for written language will the activities become meaningful and purposeful to him. If he derives satisfaction from using written language to meet some of the needs of everyday living, the program in written language will be a vitalized experience for him.

Writing invitations, thank-you-notes, acceptance notes, and friendly letters are some of the most significant uses of written language, not only in adult life but also in child life. Language teaching in the classroom must be integrated with the numerous occasions in which the child needs to write a letter or a note. Through such integration written language lessons can be made replete with meaning and purpose. There is no place in the classroom for artificial, purposeless writing; time is too precious to waste it upon meaningless written exercises.

In addition to the writing of friendly notes and letters, the child will have need for writing business letters, for making lists, for preparing reports, for writing the minutes of a meeting, for preparing questions to use in an interview, for recording individual and group experiences, for writing an original story or playlet, for organizing and issuing a class or school newspaper, and for writing creative verse. Making use of functional situations in teaching oral and written language calls for the organization of language activities around meaningful units of language experience. The following outlines of units illustrate how both oral and written language work may be

vitalized through functional, integrated, language activities organized around meaningful, interesting, learning experiences:

PIONEER LIFE AND EARLY HISTORY OF MISHAWAKA

I. Oral language activities

A. Participating in social conversation and discussion

1. Relating what the group knows about pioneers
2. Discussing pictures of pioneer life
3. Telling experiences of grandparents who were early settlers in Mishawaka
4. Comparing Mishawaka today with its appearance a hundred years ago

B. Using the telephone

1. Calling one of the older residents in the community to extend an invitation to talk to the class
2. Calling the librarian in the children's department of the Public Library to invite her to come to school to tell the group about interesting pioneer books in the Public Library
3. Calling the person in charge of the Northern Indiana Historical Museum to make arrangements for a trip to the Museum

C. Making and acknowledging introductions

1. Introducing the resident
2. Introducing the librarian
3. Introducing mother or father to the group
4. Acknowledging a classmate's introduction of mother or father
5. Acknowledging the teacher's introduction of the person in charge of the Museum

D. Relating personal experiences

1. Telling about visits to the pioneer village at Spring Mill State Park or to some other similar place
2. Telling about a talk with grandmother or grandfather about the early history of Mishawaka

E. Describing a person, object, or scene

1. Looking at pictures of pioneer families and describing their dress
2. Looking at pictures of pioneer homes and describing both the exterior and the interior
3. Describing the surroundings of a pioneer house
4. Describing the fort, covered wagons, spinning wheels, warming pan

F. Presenting plans to an individual or group

1. Conferring with the principal to arrange for the group to make a visit to the Northern Indiana Historical Museum
2. Committees reporting their plans for their parts in a group endeavor, such as a playlet, movie, frieze, or construction

G. Giving directions

1. Telling classmates how to find the grave of Princess Mishawaka
2. Telling classmates how to make candles

H. Making announcements

1. Committees announcing progress made on their parts of some group endeavor
2. Announcing the completion of a movie, frieze, construction, playlet, or exhibit of antiques to the children in another classroom and inviting them to come to see the completed project

3. Announcing the scenes and characters in a playlet

I. Giving reports

1. Telling about an interesting pioneer book in the room library
2. Telling about a movie that portrays pioneer life
3. Reporting information about Mishawaka, given by some of its older residents
4. Telling classmates about the work of LaSalle

J. Telling and retelling stories

1. Retelling the story of Princess Mishawaka
2. Retelling the story of the settlement of Mishawaka
3. Retelling a favorite story of pioneer life
4. Telling an original pioneer story

II. Written language activities

A. Writing invitations, thank-you-notes, acceptance notes

1. Writing notes to mothers to ask them if they will go with the group to the Museum
2. Writing thank - you - notes to mothers who went with the group
3. Writing invitations to parents or to the children in another room to come to see a completed project
4. Writing a thank-you-note to the resident who talked to the group about Mishawaka's early history
5. Writing thank-you-notes to persons who contributed objects to the exhibit of antiques

B. Writing friendly letters

1. Composing a group letter to a former classmate, telling about the trip to the Museum

2. Writing individual letters to a sick classmate, telling about the most interesting part of the Museum

C. Making lists

1. Listing pioneer foods, tools, cooking utensils, wild animals of pioneer days
2. Making a list of things the group wishes to find out about pioneer life
3. Making a list of questions to ask the person who comes to the classroom to talk about the early days in Mishawaka
4. Listing the most important things learned about pioneer life

D. Summarizing

1. Writing group compositions about the early history of Mishawaka
2. Composing group compositions for a booklet about pioneer life

E. Recording personal experiences

1. Writing a paragraph about the experience of helping to make candles
2. Writing a paragraph about some interesting object seen at the Museum

F. Writing original verses

1. Composing a group poem about Princess Mishawaka
2. Writing original, individual verses about pioneer children
3. Writing verses to accompany pictures in a movie of pioneer life

GARDENING

I. Oral language activities

A. Participating in social conversation and discussion

1. Value of gardening
2. Kinds of gardens
3. Different soils
4. Arrangement of garden plots

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5. Common vegetables
 6. Well-known flowers
 7. Important duties of a gardener
- B. Using the telephone
1. Calling the proprietor of a nursery or greenhouse for a visiting appointment
 2. Calling an enthusiastic member of the community's Garden Club to ask him to speak to the group about gardening
- C. Making and acknowledging introductions
1. Acknowledging the teacher's introduction of the proprietor of the greenhouse or nursery
 2. Introducing the speaker from the Garden Club
- D. Relating personal experiences
1. Reporting individual successes as a gardener
 2. Relating an interesting garden experience
 3. Telling about some of the difficulties and troubles of a gardener
 4. Relating an amusing gardening experience
 5. Talking on the following topics:
 Why I Like To Garden
 My First Garden
 How I Take Care of My Garden
 What I Raise in My Garden
 The Loveliest Garden I Ever Saw
- E. Describing a person, object, or scene
1. Describing a favorite flower or vegetable
 2. Describing an attractive garden plot
 3. Describing a lovely flower arrangement
- F. Presenting plans to an individual or group
1. Conferring with the principal to arrange for the group to visit a nursery or greenhouse
 2. Committees reporting their plans for their participation in a group endeavor, such as preparing a garden box or a garden plot at school
 3. Reporting individual plans for a garden arrangement at home
- G. Giving directions
1. Directing the group to a lovely garden in the community
 2. Telling the group how to prepare the soil, how and when to plant, and how to care for the garden
- H. Making announcements
1. Announcing the date and place of the school flower show
 2. Announcing to other class groups the date and time of the assembly program on "Gardening"
- I. Giving reports
1. Reporting pertinent information about gardening gathered from library books
 2. Reporting on the progress of the home garden
 3. Telling about items of information on gardening heard over the radio
 4. Reporting a talk heard at the meeting of the Garden Club
- J. Telling and retelling stories
1. Telling a favorite garden story or anecdote
 2. Impersonating a flower and telling an original story of its life
- II. Written language activities
- A. Writing invitations, thank-you-notes, acceptance notes
1. Writing invitations to mothers to come to hear the speaker from the Garden Club

2. Writing a thank-you-note to the speaker
 3. Writing a thank-you-note to the proprietor of the nursery or greenhouse
- B. Writing friendly letters
1. Sending a letter to a sick classmate to tell him about the visit to the nursery or greenhouse
 2. Writing to a former classmate, telling him about class plans for gardening
- C. Writing business letters
1. Writing for seed catalogs
 2. Writing the state conservation department to get information about soil
- D. Filling blank forms and keeping records
1. Keeping charts on the planting and growth of seeds and plants
 2. Keeping a chart record of garden costs and profits
- E. Taking notes
1. Taking notes on the talk given by the speaker from the Garden Club
 2. Keeping notes on the progress of the home garden
 3. Taking notes on material in a book on gardening
 4. Taking notes on garden reports by classmates
- F. Making a list
1. Listing plants best suited to our soil and climate
 2. Listing steps in gardening
- G. Outlining
1. Making an outline of a report to be given before the class
 2. Outlining an article on gardening read in a magazine or a book
- H. Summarizing
1. Writing paragraph summaries on each of the important steps in gardening
 2. Summarizing the most important values of gardening
- I. Making a bibliography
1. Preparing a bibliography of classroom references on gardening
 2. Making a bibliography of stories and poems relating to gardening
- J. Writing the minutes of a meeting
1. A functional language activity for class groups organized as Garden Clubs
- K. Preparing questions to ask in an interview
1. Determining what questions should be asked during the visit to a nursery or greenhouse
 2. Preparing questions to ask a neighbor or a friend of the family who is a successful gardener
- L. Recording personal experiences
1. Writing paragraphs on some of the following topics:
Gardening is My Hobby
Fun in Gardening
My Troubles as a Gardener
The Favorite Spot in My Garden
 2. Making a garden booklet containing illustrations and accounts of favorite flowers and vegetables grown in the home garden
- M. Writing original verses or stories
1. Writing a verse or two about a favorite flower
 2. Composing a poem about the home garden
 3. Writing an original story about some vegetable
 4. Writing an original story about the joy of sharing a garden with others

Some Outstanding Fall Children's Books

IRENE GELTCH AND IRENE B. MELOY¹

FOR PRIMARY GRADES

Here's a Penny. Written and illustrated by Carolyn Haywood. Harcourt, \$2.00.

His real name was William, but he was called Penny because when he was a baby he looked like a brand new copper penny. When Penny was six years old, friend Patsy told him that because he had been adopted he was not "really truly" his mommy's and daddy's little boy. When mother explained that there is only one thing that makes a little boy "really truly" and that is his mother's love for him, Penny felt better. Children in high second and third grades will enjoy reading about Penny, his fun at the Hallowe'en party, his try at selling newspapers, and his ambition to be a ball player. They will feel vicarious satisfaction when Penny's parents decide to adopt another boy, thus giving Penny the brother of his choice. A warm little story of home life, noteworthy because of the "adoption" element.

In the Forest. Story and pictures by Marie Hall Ets. Viking, \$1.00.

A most fascinating black and white picture book with one or two lines of text under each picture. A little boy with a new horn and a paper hat goes for a walk in the forest and finds the animals most friendly and co-operative. They have a wonderful parade and picnic which breaks up after a game of hide and seek, when the animals disappear. Mixture of matter of fact and whimsical humor makes it fit to stand beside the loved Johnny Crow books.

Mother Goose. Seventy-seven verses, selected and illustrated by Tasha Tudor. Oxford, \$2.00.

As exquisite an edition of Mother Goose as could be desired. No child can fail to have his sense of beauty stirred by the soft colors, the quaint personages, and the lovely countryside depicted here. This is by no means to be chosen as the first Mother Goose. The baby still will prefer plainer pictures and primary colors. Although many of the most familiar verses appear, there are a number of less well known ones. Eminently desirable as a supplement to other editions.

Once There Was Olga. By Josephine Balfour Payne. Illustrated by Joan Balfour Payne. Putnam, \$1.00.

A little lesson in gratitude is cleverly hidden away in this story of the sleek, fat little donkey who refused to climb the hill for his kind owners. Told in folk-lore style with a humorous black and white sketch for each page of text, it will appeal to the young readers. Excellent, new material for the storyteller.

Park Book. By Charlotte Zolotow. Pictures by H. A. Rey. Harper, \$1.75.

If there is anyone who does not know what a park is like, let him look at this delightful book. When he finishes he will have a clear idea and most certainly he will say with the little boy in the book, "I like the park." From the very early morning, "when the light is pale gold," till night "when only the starry sky surrounds the park," all the sights and activities are described in simple, charming prose. The pictures carry out the spirit of the text. Their fresh colors, many

¹Members of the staff of the Thomas Hughes Room, Chicago Public Library. Mention of titles in this article does not preclude listing in the section "Review and Criticism" in this or other issues.

details, life, and movement have a childlike quality that will appeal to the youngsters. Primary teachers will find it useful in their social science classes.

Red Light Green Light. Written by Golden MacDonald. Illustrated by Leonard Weisgard. Doubleday, \$2.00.

An unusual picture book whose illustrations, many of them double spread, will intrigue the children. The reiteration of "red light stop, green light go" will impress itself indelibly on young brains. The story begins in the morning when all things come out of their homes, whether a barn, a tent, a house, a garage, or a hole. All day they travel over the long roads stopping at the red lights, going when the green lights shine. At last the day is over and they return to their homes. The pictures show the gentle brooding dark with all things at rest and only the moon and the signal lights still gleaming for the belated traveller. It seems too bad the author did not provide a smoother running text but at all events this is a book that must be considered in choosing the new collection of picture books.

Sasha and the Samovar. By Lorraine and Jerrold Beim. Illustrated by Raffaello Busoni. Harcourt, \$1.75.

Sasha thought he was big—bigger than the family samovar—so when brothers Petya and Alexei, and later Papa, went away to join the Red Army he wanted to do something to help win the war. Much to his disappointment he was pronounced too little to take care of the cows, or to drive the tractor, or to help with the hay. Sasha finally decided that to take the samovar to the fields would be his way of helping, and how he managed to get it there is told in a series of well built up incidents. Especially important because there is little on Russia for primary grades. This pleasing tale offers a suggestion of hearty

every-day living as well as the slight war interest. Numerous soft pencil sketches are a perfect complement to the text.

This is the Milk That Jack Drank. Adapted from Mother Goose by William R. Scott. Illustrated with paintings by Charles G. Shaw. Scott, \$1.25.

A gay picture book for the young reader patterned after the familiar "House That Jack Built." Bright colored, poster-like illustrations show us the house where Jack lived, the bottles of milk all cold and white, the milkman, the wagon, the horse of dappled gray, the farmer, the cow, and many other things that make one realize "There's more of a story than you would think in a glass of milk for Jack to drink." Preschool children will enjoy it as well as the beginning readers.

Wings for Per. By Ingri and Edgar Parin d'Aulaire. Doubleday, \$2.50.

On a farm in Norway, halfway between the sea and the clouds, lived Per. Always he longed to be free and to fly like the eagles which sailed past the crags on their broad wings. Per's forefathers had built the farm high on the ledge to be safe from enemies, but Per believed that there was no longer any danger that the strong would attack the weak. Years later when a strong enemy invaded his country with warplanes and took the land he realized that he was mistaken. With some friends he escaped to a friendly country in a fishing boat and from there sailed to the United States to fulfil his desire to "be a flier and clear the enemy out of the sky over my country." A superbly illustrated picture story book imbued with a feeling of Norway and the love of liberty extant in the world. The closing pages present the hope that in the new world airplanes will be used to bring help and comfort instead of destruction. "On a bomber plane I will fly home. I will pull the bomb doors open, and out shall fall not bombs but

food. The children will not duck and run but will smile and wave to the plane, and I will see how a new spring erases hunger and mistrust from their thin faces—Look, Per has wings."

FOR THE MIDDLE GRADES

The Hundred Dresses. By Eleanor Estes.

Illustrated by Louis Slobodkin. Harcourt, \$2.50.

Here at last is a story for children dealing skillfully with some of the painful and perplexing problems they are likely to encounter. It concerns Wanda Petronski, a sensitive, beauty-loving little Polish girl in a small town American community. She wore the same faded blue dress to school every day and yet affirmed "I got a hundred dresses home—all lined up in my closet." Wanda's schoolmates made her the target for their laughter and jeers, until one day something happened which made them ashamed of their cruel sport. As for the hundred dresses, Wanda really did have them, only they were paper dresses—one hundred exquisite designs, lavishly and gorgeously colored. A story told with dignity and restraint, bringing home two important truths: that sometimes one must take a stand; and that one is not always given the opportunity to make amends.

Juba's New Moon. By Isabel McLennan McMeekin. Illustrated by Nicholas Panesis. Messner, \$2.00.

"Stan' up, all you Shadrow chillun—Peer at de new moon ober yo' lef' shoulder—an' make a wish, a magnifical wish." It was thus Juba admonished her little flock that she had shepherded across the wilderness, on the last night before they reached their new home in Kentucky. Quickly they voiced their desires, a pony, a boat, a fiddle. It was only Kate who hesitated and finally said impulsively, "that I'll be brave." Bravery was something very necessary in the pioneer days and Kate as well

as the others was to find use for it in the years to come as they settled down in the new cabin, made acquaintance with the neighbors, and grew accustomed to wilderness life. As in the author's earlier book, *Journey Cake*, the character of Juba stands out. The family's happiness and prosperity is due as much to her unswerving allegiance to the high call of duty and her loving discipline as to the magic of the New Moon.

Laffy of the Navy Salvage Divers. By Iris Vinton. Drawings by Addison Burbank. Dodd, \$2.25.

As a story of a clever, impish, lovable fox terrier this book will delight dog lovers; as a detailed entertaining account of Navy salvage divers and their training it will have an equally strong appeal. Laffy is a real dog, his adventures are real, his sailor friends are actually men of the Navy Training School (Salvage) Pier 88, North River, New York City. Because of his display of gameness the six month old puppy was adopted as mascot by the men of the salvage diving school, and named *U. S. S. Lafayette*, Laffy for short, after the biggest ship in the world, the former *Normandie*. The diving school, the only one of its kind in the world, came into being because of the need for more divers to raise the *Lafayette*, and students are trained through actual diving operations on that and other sunken craft. Laffy soon became just as much a part of life on the Pier as any of the divers; and made himself thoroughly at home in the classrooms and barracks, the wharf and the diving float. His antics, absorbing because of their perfect naturalness, together with the jovial comradery of the men and their affection for the lively dog, make the book very appealing to boys, and some girls, of ten and above. The numerous drawings, in dark blue, brown, and white, are just as captivating as the text.

Michael and the Captain. By Ruth Langland Holberg. Illustrated by Sandra James. Crowell, \$2.00.

Captain John Smith is a familiar figure to American children but they have not often met him as in this book, fighting the Turks. The real hero of the book, however, is Michael, son of a Serbian farmer. The author gives us a vivid picture of life of this farm where the grandfather and grandmother reign and direct the activities of their five sons and their wives and all the grandchildren. It is a busy life of rough abundance and sturdy independence, where the holiday festivals are gaily celebrated according to tradition.

The Turks at this time were struggling to conquer all the Slavs and there was fierce enmity between them. Every five years they sent down scouts to seize the strongest and best of the Serbian lads to serve in their fierce Janizaries. Michael was a fine physical specimen and would be almost certain to be chosen, so the family provided him with a swift pony, money, and provisions and sent him out of the country till the danger was past. Captain John Smith, who had fought heroically against the Turks, was Michael's hero and it was a heart warming adventure to meet him, even though it was on a battle field where the young Englishman lay wounded and defeated. They swore blood brotherhood before each one was carried away to a life of slavery. The Captain's dreams of the New World and his insistence that freedom of spirit brings freedom of body, cheered Michael in his captivity. Chance brought the two together again and they made their way to Michael's home. Though he had intended to go to the New World, the call of his own land was too strong for the Serbian lad. He must stay where his heart called. It was his to carry on the ancestral plan of life. A distinctive story with a note of freedom and love of country running through.

Rabbit Hill. By Robert Lawson. Viking, \$2.00.

"New Folks coming, new Folks coming into the Big House!" This was the great news which was being discussed by all the animals on the Hill. Would the new Folks have traps, shotguns, and dogs; would they be planting Folks or would they be shiftless like the last family who lived in the Big House? Father Rabbit, who was a Southern Gentleman, hoped for a nice field of bluegrass, Porkey the Woodchuck longed for clover and timothy, Foxy was counting on chickens and ducks, while Red Buck admitted that he would not be above a mess of garden sass now and then. Uncle Analdas Rabbit, old and experienced, said to his nephew, Little Georgie, "There's Good Times, Georgie, an' there's Bad Times, but they go. An' there's good Folks an' there's bad Folks an' they go too—but there's always new Folks comin'." When Little Georgie was injured and carried into the Big House, some of the animals mistrusted the Man and the Lady and bitter controversy reigned on the Hill. Joy returned, however, on Midsummer's eve, when Little Georgie, lively and well, was given back to his family. On that magical evening, also, friendship and good will were sealed when the Man unveiled a statue of Saint Francis of Assisi, with water dropping from the hands to form a pool, round about which was a feeding ledge bearing the words, "There is enough for all." The animals in this humorous adventure story have something of the whimsical quality of those in "Wind in the Willows." There is an underlying philosophy in the book which will be caught only by the unusual reader. The beautiful brown lithographs make the book outstanding.

Sky Ride. By Katherine Pollock. Illustrated by Ruth Wood. Scribner, \$1.75.

For two boys whose greatest interest in life was aviation it was a decided thrill to find that the owner of a nearby flying field was to be the new boarder at their mother's

house. It was even more of a thrill to be allowed to visit the air field, help with odd jobs about the planes and pick up bits of information from the student instruction. When Mr. Willis saw how eager they were, he allowed them to go up in a plane with him. How their knowledge was put to good use makes a spectacular ending for the book. A lively, interesting story of two natural boys that will fill a need for aviation stories for younger boys.

Then There Were Five. Written and illustrated by Elizabeth Enright. Farrar, \$2.00.

The four interesting Melendy children appear once more in a gay spirited story of modern every-day life. A new character enters into the scene—Mark Herron, an orphan who lives on a rundown farm under the control of a cross, cruel cousin. Russ and Randy meet him when they are out on a scrap-collecting expedition and from then on every minute he can filch from his chores is spent with the four young people. Mr. Melendy spends most of his time in Washington, and Cuffy the old housekeeper is called away, so the children have free range. Mark proves to be a fine intelligent lad, and most congenial; and when his uncle dies in a farm house fire there is every reason to applaud the decision that he should be adopted into the family. Fifth and sixth grade children will be glad to join in the adventures of these likable youngsters as they have done in the preceding books.

Three in the Jungle. By Karena Shields. Illustrated by Harold Petersen. Harcourt, \$2.00.

The spirit of mystery and magic of the ancient Mayas permeates this unusual mystery story of Central America. Teddy, a young American, is a guest on a rubber plantation. The little daughter of the English owner and her playmate, a native boy, delight in showing

him about, though they wonder that he can be ignorant of so many things. The voice of the Ciudad, the strange wailing noise that carries messages and warnings of danger to the natives, has a strange fascination for Catarina and she determines that someday she will find the source. She does so as the result of an intensely dramatic experience. The three children become lost in the jungle with nothing to guide them but Sac Chel's sacred amulet. Through the fury of a tropical storm they pass safely to a native village in the Chiapas Hills where they see something of the ancient Maya culture. Catarina and Sac Chel come at length into the presence of Him-Who-Listens-And-Waits and learn the secret of the conch shell messages. To Teddy, old Na Na says "You were a lad who had much to learn. You had a stout heart and a willing hand, but you believed in nothing, you could not see. It may well be that there are many others like you in that place where you were born and they cannot all be taught. But you have learned, and will stand head and shoulders above them in your knowing."

The author, whose childhood was passed on this very rubber plantation, has told her story skillfully, with a feeling for atmosphere that makes this outstanding among stories of Latin America.

Uncle Bennie Goes Visiting. Written and illustrated by Emma L. Brock. Knopf, \$2.00.

Uncle Bennie is just the kind of frolicsome and ingenious uncle to make a child's heart glad. After many years as a grocery clerk he leaves the city to spend the summer on his niece's farm. Niece Janie has now grown up, but her children, Susie and Bill, are just the age of the little Janie of twenty-five years ago. Uncle Bennie loves blooming things and soon he has the whole farmstead "a rainbow of flowers." There are window

boxes on the barn windows, on the sills of the milk house, and trailing roses around the little house which Uncle Bennie fitted up as an animal hospital. The flower boxes high up on the windmill platform, just under the sails of the windmill, the children consider one of Uncle Bennie's nicest surprises. He has a way with animals too, and uses his best grocery store manners when talking to them. "Aren't you, maybe, magic, Uncle Bennie?" said Susie. She thinks that some day she "might see him floating off through the sky under an umbrella the way Mary Poppins did." Readers of eight to ten will enjoy Uncle Bennie, the two natural children, and the daily round of tasks as depicted in this exuberant story of farm life.

Yonnie Wondernose. By Marguerite De Angeli. Doubleday, \$2.00.

Jonathan was seven years old. He was a little Pennsylvania Dutch boy with such a lively curiosity that his father's nickname Yonnie Wondernose was inevitable. One day Yonnie was left at home with Granny and his younger sister "Don't be a Wondernose, now," called Pop. "Remember you are man of the house," cried Mom. Yonnie tried to remember. He carried in round wood for Granny. He fed the pigs. He took the horses to water. He did all the things the man of the house should do even though that "wondernose" of his was always pulling him off on sidetracks. When the barn was struck by lightning and set afire in the night, Yonnie did good work getting out the animals though he almost forgot Dunder the great bull because he stopped to look at the red fire engine. Pop was pleased, though, when he came home and Yonnie was pleased too, for now Pop considered him a man, able to ride the big work horse when they harrowed the field for winter wheat. Children below fourth grade who may have some difficulty reading the book

will love the charming De Angeli illustrations and will listen to the story with pleasure.

FOR THE UPPER GRADES

Battles—How They Are Won. By Mary Elting and Robert Weaver. Illustrated by Jeanne Bendick. Doubleday, \$2.00.

How the great battles of the present war were planned and fought is the subject of this extremely readable book. Comparisons with strategy and tactics in other wars helps to make the discussion clear and vivid. The terminology of war, such as Envelopment, Penetration, etc., are explained, while graphic diagrams and maps help make clear the situations. A fascinating book for the amateur strategist, whether in his teens or older.

Buckeye Boy. By Marjorie Medary. Decorations by James MacDonald. Longmans, \$2.25.

"With twenty-six leaden soldiers I can conquer the world." These words sprang suddenly at Tom Kenyon out of the pages of an old *Farmer's Almanac* whose pages he had been idly turning. Meaningless at first it gradually came to him that printing was a really important job. "It was a power over people—almost a kind of magic." His father had been a printer and Tom remembered his eagerness and enthusiasm. His father had died, however, when Tom was ten and left him in care of an unkind uncle. It was the treatment here that caused him to run away when he was fifteen. He found work as mule driver on the canal, but the life was no easier. The canal boat companies were facing heavy competition from the railroads and their employees, especially the boys, were forced to do heavy work with pay sometimes months overdue. A severe illness ends this part of Tom's life. While convalescing at the home of another uncle he decided to take up the trade of printer. He goes to a nearby town as apprentice in a newspaper office. Salmon P. Chase

was running for governor of Ohio on the Whig-Republican platform and Tom besides trying to master the art of the printer becomes interested in politics. Tom's sister Anne and his friend, the red-haired coquette Molly, have an important place in the story, each one having a definite influence on his decisions. The historical background is excellent and the plot lively enough to sustain the interest of the 12 to 14 year olds.

A Dipper Full of Stars. A Beginner's Guide to the Heavens. By Lou Williams. Follett, \$2.00.

A delightful introduction to the fascinating study of astronomy. Not only does the author locate for us the most important star groups of the Northern Hemisphere, but she includes the myths and legends relating to them. Each chapter is planned as an evening of star-gazing, beginning with the Big Dipper. In addition there is material on the sun, planets, meteors, and comets. The style is informal and pleasing. Illustrated with many diagrams and photographs.

Exile's Daughter: a Biography of Pearl Buck. Coward, \$2.50.

Most older girls like stories about successful women. If in addition they have an interest in Chinese life, if they have read any of Pearl Buck's novels or if they are thinking along the lines of democracy and racial justice, here is the book that will please. Written in objective style and full of interesting incidents, it presents a warm, vital personality. It pictures Pearl Buck's childhood in China, college life in America, later life in China and her eventual return to America. Stress is laid on her passionate love for America and its past history; her desire that China and America should understand one another; her belief in peace and union through freedom of all races.

Interwoven with the daughter's biography is a tender picture of Pearl Buck's mother.

The author is Mrs. Buck's own sister, called Faith in the book. It is well illustrated with portraits and is interesting, timely and stimulating.

From Star to Star. By Eric P. Kelly. Illustrations by Manning De V. Lee. Lippincott, \$2.00.

Fine, idealistic story of a boy of medieval Poland who endures his father's anger and sacrifices knighthood for the sake of attending the University of Krakow. Introduces such characters as Brother Carolus and Nicolas Copernicus and pictures the life of the medieval university with the struggle between the old and the new learning. Will inspire young folks of today with the knowledge that the people then struggled for and believed in the same ideals that they themselves hold dear.

Giants of China. By Helena Kuo. Illustrated by Woodi Ishmael. Dutton, \$3.00.

It is a pretty well known fact that young people's interest in history is centered in the spirit and heroism of individuals rather than in events. This collection of eleven biographies of outstanding people will go far towards impressing the history of China on the mind of the reader and giving him an understanding of Chinese thought and culture. The sketches start with Huang Ti the first Emperor who was not a legendary figure; include the great teacher Confucius, the gay poet Li Po, The Dowager Empress and others, coming down to modern times with the Generalissimo and Madam Chiang. The writing is spirited and dramatic. Appeal is added by the black and white illustrations in line and wash.

Granite Harbor. By Dorothy Maywood Bird. Illustrations by Gertrude Howe. Macmillan, \$2.00.

"This north country, once it gets into your blood, is a fever. You'll never get over it." It was hard for Terrill Blake to believe this; after sunny Texas, Granite Harbor on

Lake Superior seemed the bleakest, coldest place on earth. She hated the desolate sky line, the driving snow, and Lake Superior's roar. However, friendships and fun at school make a difference, and so do winter sports played on clear, crisp nights, with Lake Superior glittering in the moonlight and perhaps the awesome play of northern lights all around the sky. Coasting parties, skating parties, snowshoe tramps, Terrill enjoys them all. After overcoming a fear of high places which has hampered her ever since an automobile accident she becomes a proficient skier under the guidance of her friend Shannon O'Keefe. When Shannon breaks an arm and is unable to take her place in the ski meet, Terrill substitutes for her and succeeds in keeping the cup for Granite Harbor High School. A book which ably presents the attraction of the Lake Superior country in all seasons, besides offering a picture of pleasant home relationships and a variety of outdoor sports. The example of fear honestly faced and overcome also adds to the value of the book.

Long Trains Roll. By Stephen W. Meader.

Illustrated by Edward Shenton. Harcourt, \$2.00.

Railroad stories have always had an attraction for boys, and this one has the added interest of mystery. Nowadays when the haunting, long drawn out whistle of a locomotive echoes across the distant night, it evokes not the wistful desire for far away places but a prayer for the safety of troop trains, tankers, loads of munitions, cattle, and grain. The railroads are an important link in our chain of war activities. Randy Macdougall knew all this. He was spending his high school vacation working as section hand at a place where a four track line led the great cross-continental trains through a gap in the Appalachians. The son of a long time railway

engineer, Randy had the railroad in his blood and he firmly intended to make it his life work when school days were over. Randy was very willing to make things easier for the new section hand by answering his numerous questions, but it did seem strange to him that a middle aged bookkeeper, a poet, a man who had been in many foreign countries, should seek work as a section hand as his contribution to the country's war effort. It seemed strange, too, that he needed so often to make a note in his little red book to remind himself of something he must do. Later the notebook is found to contain cryptic notations that might have reference to trains passing over the grade. When the new section hand is linked to the mysterious campers whose traces on Big Calico Mountain overlooking the track were found on their Sunday rambles by Randy and a Polish boy from the next valley, the FBI took a hand in the proceedings. Between them all the plot to wreck the railroad was thwarted, and Randy got his chance as fireman. There is much information about railroad work, but it does nothing towards slowing up the well sustained plot.

Mayflower Boy. By Stanley Young. Illustrated by Edward Shenton. Farrar, \$2.00.

The Pilgrims are no longer far away and unreal after one has read this book; they are human beings with a share of human frailty, and with interests and feelings closely akin to our own. The central figure of the story is Giles Hopkins, brother of Oceanus who was born on shipboard, and son of Stephen Hopkins, one of the signers of the Mayflower Compact. Giles' father is at first unsympathetic toward the democratic ideals of Governor Carver but later becomes a strong voice of concord during the tense moments of a civil crisis. The author vividly depicts the dreary days of waiting in the Mayflower off the coast of Cape Cod; the first gallant ex-

pedition into the wilderness; the building of the Common House; the tragic dwindling of the little company under the rigors and hardships of winter; the capture of Giles by the Indians and his rescue by Miles Standish, Squanto and others; and finally the cheer and comfort of the first Thanksgiving. A lively and unusual story which will be thoroughly enjoyed.

Yea! Wildcats! By John Tunis. Harcourt, \$2.00.

Most boys consider a new sports story by John Tunis an event. They will not feel he

has let them down in this one. There is the same sure knowledge of sports, the tense situations, and a sound moral victory. Boys will enjoy this story of how a coach built up a second rate basketball team till it was able to contend in the State finals. Because they lost the important game the enthusiastic fans back home lost control of themselves and almost brought about a riot. The lessons in good citizenship as well as sportsmanship are of value and will not be lost on any reader. The problems of the young coach are a challenge to any thinking boy who must make his own decisions on right and wrong.

HOW GOOD ARE THE COMIC BOOKS?

(Continued from page 285)

the Phantom, Dick Tracy, or Dr. Marvel. For example, as a magic word, Abracadabra or Rumpelstilzkin is not so powerful a stimulus to attention as *Shazam*.

In the present circumstances I think we shall do well to permit the comic books to have the market it has taken such pains to build up. We may as well admit that we have not succeeded in doing otherwise. As teachers

we should encourage the publishers of this material to use acceptable language, to report historical facts accurately, to encourage the virtues of human behavior, and to condemn the vices subtly enough so as not to become preachy.

I think they will listen to us. We are a powerful influence on human beings.

VITALIZING THE LANGUAGE PROGRAM

(Continued from page 291)

Language is a living instrument needed in all of life's social relationships. It can never be truly disassociated from life. Therefore, the language program in the classroom must

make use of life's social needs for language. Through such use the teaching of language will be vitalized and the learning of language will be enriched.

Children's Poetic Expression¹

ANN STANFORD²

Children's poetic expression is at its best when children write of the things around them and of feelings which they have themselves experienced. When they are thus acquainted with their subject and when they state their subject in a simple way, children often write good descriptive poetry. In the following paragraphs are given examples of the types of verse that children of various ages compose.

Most of the poetic expression of children five to eight years old is oral. It may be a rhythmic phrase which the child repeats again and again while he is carrying blocks or hammering, or it may be a bit of conversation or a sudden expression about what he has seen. Young children are not familiar enough with the language to use hackneyed phrases all of the time, and their words are sometimes surprisingly apt. Besides, the children are so unfamiliar with the everyday world that they express wonder at things older people would not notice. Here are some examples by first-grade children:

Flowers are growing on the green grass,
And I am growing too.

The hills are just tumbling down!
This morning I saw the most beautiful sight.

The sky was as black as black;
Then there was a little place that was greenish blue.
It looked like the door to another sky.

Children of eight to ten years have seen more of the vicinity in which they live and write descriptions of wider variety:

It was dark and windy.
Through the trees a light was shining.
Raindrops falling

Sound of footsteps
A dog's barking
Leaves blowing.

Annamae Wood

If I were to live on a hill,
I could see the valley in the early night
Fill up with fog.
It would look like a lake filled with boats
Where the lights shone through.

David Emde

Sometimes, especially when the teacher encourages it, they write of people they have heard about, people in different times and places, putting themselves in the role of another person with the special ability children have of pretending—for example, this poem about a pioneer:

Behold, in yonder bend the leaves move,
but not with the wind.
Foolish one, 'tis but a rabbit scare.

Sherman Edwards

Children of eleven to thirteen, also, write capable poems about other peoples, although it must be remembered that vicarious poems can never have the sincerity of more personal experience:

FARMER'S WOMAN

'Tis warm this morning
Surya has just begun his journey.
How white the clouds are,
And how blue the sky!

The jungle is still!
The silent trees do not seem
To harbor any harmful beings.
But tonight the howls and chatterings
Of ferocious beasts
Will frighten many.

¹Poetry quoted was written by children in Los Angeles County, and is from a collection made by Lorraine Sherer.

²Recently curriculum assistant in the Los Angeles County Schools.

But come!
 This is no time for idle thoughts,
 My husband will be angry,
 If his Jalpan is not ready,
 When he returns from cleansing in
 'The holy Ganges.
 I must husk my rice today;
 Soon Surya will be near,
 I do not choose to labor
 In the heat,
 That burns my very soul.

Come sleepy daughter,
 You must hasten to the well,
 And bring the fresh, cool water
 For today.

Jane White

Oh, Brave Scalped Mountain,
 Who sheds blood of big waters
 Give thee a little of thy blood
 To cleanse my son, Wolf Ear.
 Give him courage, and strength,
 Make him swift as a frightened fawn
 Running for his mother afar off—
 Make him Chief of the Sioux—
 Give him a good war horse,
 Faster than lightning in the sky.
 Give him power to win victories
 Over his enemies, the Blackfeet.

Wilbur McAfee

Generally, by the time children are eleven to thirteen, the early acute perceptions—or at least the ability to state them unself-consciously—have been lost, and they are experimenting with more mature verse forms which they have not mastered, so that, even with good instruction, their poems are apt to be mediocre. The above two poems and those below, however, show that there are exceptions of high quality:

The soft green asparagus leaves sway back
 and forth.
 A vicious blow of my sharp sickle brings
 them to the ground.
 It looks as if a hundred soft green fans are
 falling.

Seventh Grade Boy

The roar of the lion
 We hear at the zoo;
 The funny monkey
 And funnier hyena
 We see in the zoo
 And laugh.
 The roaring lion
 May not swing in the trees
 As monkeys do
 Nor gobbling turkeys
 Sweetly twitter
 Like golden canaries,
 Nor has the hyena
 Such beauty
 To match the
 Peacock's feathers,
 Nor can bulky elephants
 Swiftly race
 Like fleet deer;
 But neither can we
 Roar like lions,
 Or climb like monkeys,
 Or twitter like canaries;
 But there are many of us
 Whose beauty is like a hyena's
 And whose sizes
 Are like elephants—
 Yet we laugh heartily
 At what we see in zoos.

Joe Manriquez

Sometimes they write stories in poetry or poetic prose:

SACRED ARROW

The arrow was long and slim,
 It was feathered with black eagle feathers,
 It was the arrow of the Thunderbird—
 The sacred arrow of the Thunderbird—
 Made by old I-May,
 Father of arrow makers.
 Old I-May made the arrow.
 He said, "This is the arrow of the Thunderbird—
 For the greatest hunter of the Tewa tribe,
 He who proves himself worthy of the
 arrow
 Shall always have luck in hunting."
 —But no one had proved himself worthy
 of the arrow.

(Continued on page 317)

Improving Children's Letters

LENA WEST¹

Children are writing letters. With fathers, brothers, sisters, and other relatives in service, and playmates moving to defense areas, there is a real reason for letter writing. Each day hundreds of shy, stilted little notes are mailed. The children themselves are not satisfied with their productions. They want to express themselves gracefully and naturally. They feel that their letters lack personality and want to do something to give life to their correspondence, but they are baffled. There is nothing in their experience which will meet the situation. They are willing and anxious to learn to write interesting letters. Now is our chance!

We must make the mechanics of correct form as simple as possible. We must not allow form to become a burden which will stifle the desire to write. By this time our children are acquainted with most of the common uses of commas and capital letters. In letter writing they are merely using rules with which they are familiar.

Our fourth grade wrote letters to a child ill with chicken-pox. When she returned, she frankly stated that all the letters were about the same thing. The class decided to do something about it.

First, they discussed such stock phrases as, "I am fine. How are you? I received your letter." The text had pointed out that they were not in good taste but they had crept in. As the children talked and reasoned together, they could see that such expressions added nothing to the letter and should be omitted.

Our class felt that a paragraph should be devoted to social amenities, but we were at a

loss in knowing how to express them graciously and naturally. A committee was chosen to examine sample letters in various language texts. It was found that most of them ignored this phase of friendly letters. Blair, Neal, Foster, and Storm, *With Tongue and Pen*, Kibbe, LaBrant, and Pooley, *Handbook of English for Boys and Girls*, and McKee and McGowan, *Gaining Skill with Words* did give examples in some of their letters. We are still experimenting with this kind of paragraph. We hope that as we become accustomed to expressing ourselves through letters, we will grow more natural and fluent in this part of a friendly letter.

Next, we chose three types of individuals to whom we might be writing; a former social studies teacher, a playmate who had moved away, and a brother in service. We made a list of topics in which each might be interested. Our lists were as follows:

To Miss G.:

1. What we have studied
2. What we are studying
3. How we are improving
4. Stamp sale
5. Paper drive
6. Greek relief
7. Making slides
8. A school movie
9. The Thanksgiving assembly
10. A personal experience

The same list would be suited to our playmate, but we added,

1. New games we are playing
2. Interesting movies we have seen
3. A contest being held in Miss K's room

The brother in service would be interested in both the other lists plus

1. Family news

¹Mrs. West is a teacher in Waterloo, Iowa.

2. News of household pets
3. My new dress
4. Our Thanksgiving dinner
5. Christmas plans

Naturally, no fourth grade child could be expected to write on so many topics. After discussion we decided that our letters should cover at least three items, one of which should be a personal experience. Enough details should be given about each item to develop interesting paragraphs.

On the board we worked out a letter together. The children decided that Miss G. would be especially interested in some reports which they had just given, so we had a paragraph on reports. Since our stamp sale was nearing an end, we had a paragraph on that. A new child, who did not know Miss G., contributed the personal touch by giving his experience in changing schools. The letter was interesting, and, according to the children, long enough to be satisfying.

Having assisted in producing a letter on the board, each child felt competent to write one alone. Each looked through the list and chose three or four items about which he felt he could write. He determined the order in which they were to appear. Then, observing the rules of paragraph writing, he proceeded to write the series of paragraphs which were to constitute his letter. When finished, these letters were read and discussed together.

Letter writing merely as an English exercise would soon become boring. We grasp every opportunity which is presented for letter writing. Letters to children who are ill, invitations to other grades to attend our assemblies, thank-you letters to those who have invited us, and requests for the use of special equipment are some of the uses which we make within the building. Our children are encouraged to write letters to be mailed. These are checked for form, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling. The children feel no reluctance toward this inspection of their personal letters. They eagerly bring letters written at home to be corrected. They want each letter to be as near perfection as possible and, as yet, do not feel confident of their ability to judge their own compositions.

The object of the study is not mass production, but better individual letters. Children who have correspondents have their names listed and from time to time jot down items which they think might furnish interesting letter material. Then, when they are ready to write, they have a variety of topics from which to choose. This, together with the assurance which comes from much practice, tends to develop a sense of freedom which is reflected in the letter. The child's personality shines through. Each letter is as individual as the child himself and furnishes a satisfying outlet for self expression.

It is already motivated. Let's teach letter writing!

Understanding the Reading and Speech Difficulties of Children: A Case Study

KATE V. WOFFORD¹

To understand the difficulties of a child, it is necessary to know more than the nature of his difficulty. We also must know the child himself, intimately and in great detail. Once we understand the child, his difficulties fall properly into place and the perspective thus secured gives those who wish to help him an initial advantage never possible when we study only his difficulties. It is for this reason that modern teachers interested in helping children are developing techniques in understanding them. One of the most useful techniques thus far developed is the case study, a method long successfully employed by physicians and psychologists but only recently used generally by teachers in the classroom.

The case study is what its name implies—a compilation of enough pertinent information about a child so that a rather clear and detailed picture of him is secured. Many sources are tapped in the process of securing such information and many techniques for ascertaining and assembling the parts are employed. Some of the sources of information are: (1) the health records of the child (2) anecdotal records of behavior in many types of situations (3) records of relationships with parents, siblings, peers, and teachers, (4) achievement records and many others. The choice depends in part, upon the purposes of the study. Likewise, many techniques for tapping these sources have been found useful. Observations, interviews, home visits, and ex-

aminations are a few of the numerous ones possible of successful use in the study.

The case study method in understanding children can be applied to any type of school situation, but the small rural school is peculiarly well adapted to such a study. More likely than not, the number of children enrolled in this type of school will be small. This small enrollment means that it is within the range of physical possibility to make individual case studies of all the children and not merely of the few with special difficulties. Furthermore, records are comparatively easy to obtain. The teacher knows the families of her children well; she visits their homes, and is received as a friend and a counselor. The teacher is with her children all day and so does not face the distracting participation of the special teachers who frequently dominate the activities in an urban school.

By way of example, below are given extracts from a case study of John, aged nine years and six months. John attends a one-room rural school in western New York. There are eight grades enrolled in the school, and the children range from five to fifteen years. John is faced with two difficulties, either one of which is serious enough to threaten his success and happiness. John cannot read, though his normal grade placement as of January 1, 1944 was 3.9. He is also beset with speech handicaps. Two avenues were open to the

¹Director of Rural Education, State Teachers College, Buffalo, N. Y.

teacher in her efforts to assist John. She could directly attack John's problems in reading and speech for they are obvious, and help from specialists is near at hand. Or the teacher could take the longer but surer route to bring assistance to John. She could make a complete case study of John as a person faced with two serious obstacles to successful learning. Fortunately, the teacher chose the latter method. Consequently, a careful study was made of John and all sources of information possible were used in an effort to (1) understand John as a person, (2) interpret the finding in terms of his difficulties and (3) plan and put into effect a program to assist John in overcoming his learning handicaps.

From November 1, 1942 to January 12, 1944, careful anecdotal records were kept of the behavior of John considered significant by the teacher. The samples here given are taken directly from the case study records. Because of the limits set by a magazine article only samples of the case study can be included.²

Things I Knew About John Before the Study was Made.

"John is always very neat and clean. He usually wears to school a blue sweater and a pair of blue corduroy trousers. He is a blonde with fair skin, light brown hair and blue eyes. He wears glasses but frowns when he looks at printed matter. To all appearances John's home life is normal and happy. He lives in an attractive home with all the modern conveniences. There are four other people who share his home—his mother and father, his grandfather and a sister who is six years old. The income of the family is above the average. The family lives on a hundred and eighty acre farm which the grandfather farms, though

²For obvious reasons the identity of John is concealed in this report. It is not even possible to give the name and address of his teacher, though this information will be furnished by the author upon request if a reader wishes the complete case study.

the father is the foreman of an industrial plant located not far from the farm. Both parents are interested in John and each is distressed at his inability to read at the age of nine and are embarrassed by his speech difficulties.

"In school, John is restless and inattentive. Indeed, his attention span is as short as the beginner's. When he gets excited, which is often, he stutters so badly that he becomes incoherent and none of us can understand what he is saying."

A Week's Sample of John's Anecdotal Records, Nov. 1, 1943—Nov. 5, 1943.³

"November 1st. Today, one of the boys struck John on the playground, whereupon he refused to play but asked to be made judge of the game. Later, he said he was tired and so sat alone on the grass and watched the other children play. In school, John appeared very restless. He kept wandering about the room getting into difficulties. He found a spider and placed it on the table where some children were reading. This caused much confusion, which he apparently greatly enjoyed. During the confusion John grew very excited and tried to talk but his stammering became so bad that I could not understand what he was trying to say.

"November 3rd. Today, John offered to help me clean the boards before class began. Later he came up to where I was sitting and talked to me, and took me over to the map at the back of the room and showed me where the Amazon river was. Again it seemed that John had nothing to do so he joined the first grade children at their play with clay. He was very cheerful and talked a great deal but it was difficult for me to understand him because he spoke in such a low voice. His stammering was very bad today.

"November 4th. Today in reading class I

³Between Nov. 1, 1943—Jan. 12, 1944, 47 significant anecdotes of John's behavior were recorded.

observed that John cannot sound letters. He guesses at words and cannot pronounce l or r. In the middle of a sentence he decided to carry on a conversation with me. This conversation was one-sided except for polite remarks from me. Three times I made an attempt to have him return to reading but with no success. His conversation had nothing to do with his reading lesson. Its purpose was to distract me in the hope that I would forget the reading. Again he worked with the first grade as of yesterday. Both days he should have been working at his own desk on assigned responsibilities.

"November 5th. Today he listened in on the reading class of the fifth and sixth grade children. I had to tell him three times to return to his seat before he obeyed me. He just stood there, as though he had not heard me at all."

From the eight weeks anecdotal recordings of the behavior of John, six recurring forms of behavior were established. Dates and incidents are given here only for the two forms of behavior that are directly related to the two difficulties of John mentioned above. All the others, however, are given in the case study. (1) John is interested in animals and in airplanes; (2) he is in conflict with the other children especially the older boys; (3) he makes frequent, if awkward, attempts to adjust to the children in school; (4) he gives evidence of the ability to think his way through difficulties; (5) he makes persistent efforts to escape all responsibilities connected with reading; and (6) he is frequently tense and nervous, and apparently suffers from inner conflicts.

The incidents and dates that give evidence of John's attempt to escape his reading responsibilities were: Nov. 4: John talked with the teacher about irrelevant subjects in an attempt to distract her from the reading lesson; Nov. 8: listened to reading class of fifth

and sixth grade children instead of reading at his own desk; Nov. 15: played in the sandbox when he should have been reading; Nov. 16: made paper aeroplanes and shot them about the room instead of working on assigned lessons; Nov. 22: became so upset in a reading lesson that it was necessary to stop the class; Nov. 24: looked at the *Popular Mechanics Magazine* instead of his reading lesson; Nov. 29: joined the first grade reading class, Dec. 21: used his wiles to divert the teacher's attention in reading class, Jan. 4: insisted upon talking in reading class rather than attempting to read; Jan. 6: again insisted upon talking in reading class, this time about hens and trapping muskrats; Jan. 10: continued practice of talking to distract teacher and told of a plane crash near his home; and Jan. 11: talked with his hand over his mouth during the reading class.

The incidents and dates of his tensions and nervousness were as follows: Nov. 1: wandered about the room; Nov. 9: wandered aimlessly about the room several times during the day; Nov. 11: grew very excited about plans to collect paper after school; Nov. 22: became so excited in discussing a deer's behavior with the children that he became incoherent; Dec. 23: during the Christmas play he forgot his lines on several occasions and had to be prompted, and was very nervous throughout the whole performance; January 3: when the teacher called John back from the creek where he was playing during recess, he tried to hide; and he cried three times that day because of difficulties with the other children, Jan. 5: while talking with the teacher, he nervously adjusted his glasses, folded and unfolded his arms and pulled at his trousers; Jan. 6: while working at the board he became very nervous, wringing his hands and stammering excessively, and Jan. 10: cried because one of the boys was teasing him.

In January 1944, John was taken to a reading clinic at the State Teachers College at Buffalo. The report of Professor Chester A. Pugsley, director of the clinic, became an integral part of John's record and pointed the way to remedial treatment. Professor Pugsley's report was as follows:

"Since a reliable intelligence quotient was not available, the examiner used the approximate age equivalent for his performance on about 27 portions of the reading analysis and from these computed a possible mental age. After allowing for the depressing effect of his reading deficiency, an intelligence quotient not to exceed 90 seemed reasonable.⁴ If this be accepted his present mental age is about 8-7. The mental age should give him the ability to read at about the late second grade level. His actual reading level is much below this, probably no better than that of an average mid-year first grader.

"If the estimated intelligence quotient of 90 is correct, then John began his first grade reading ability with a mental age of about 5-6 which is too low to ensure success. Failure in reading was inevitable. This initial failure to begin reading successfully begot more failure with all the resulting psychological depression that would accrue. He now shows considerable reading fear, phonetic fear, and emotional blocking when faced with reading demands.

"Judging from the mother's reports, he shows considerable inner conflict as manifested in his nightmares, fear of dark, nail biting, fear of crowds, and stuttering. These conflicts are consuming enormous amounts of John's energy. He appears pale and not fully nourished.

"It is difficult to know the true nature of his hearing difficulties. There are three possibilities:

⁴John was later given an intelligence test and his intelligence quotient was 96.

1. He has developed a psychological deafness as a defense against failure in reading.

2. He has an actual hearing loss. This should be explored by 44 audiometer test.

3. He has a weak auditory perceptual process.

Regardless of which of these three is the case, his reading progress would be affected and effort will have to be made to improve his auditory perception.

"John cooperated well in the diagnosis although he showed frequent collapse of effort when faced with the necessity to use techniques of word recognition.

"I failed to follow through a study of his laterality. John himself is right handed; his father is left handed. I should have got some clue to his dominant eye, ear, and foot. If he does not have a clearly established right or left laterality, there may result a confusion in some aspect of language (reading, spelling, writing, speaking.) The fact that he has stuttered for several years is a part of this total picture. If he does not show improvement this should be further studied.

"FINDINGS OF THE ANALYSIS

Visual Analysis—Telebinocular

John showed weakness in binocular vision but all other tests of his vision revealed an entirely normal condition, i. e. when wearing his glasses. There is no reason to believe that his reading troubles are related to vision deficiencies.

"Gates Oral Context Reading Text

His score on this test was so low it could not be given an age or grade equivalent. In other words, he is below a beginner's attainments in oral reading. Omissions, additions, repetitions, mispronunciations, complete failure to recognize many words abounded. His vocabulary of sight words is extremely low and his confidence equally low. He had no

workable techniques for getting at words. This fact showed up repeatedly throughout the day's work. The only hopeful part of the oral reading test was that when he substituted or added words they generally added some modicum of sense to what he was reading. He had no way of systematically studying words, might use any clue whether in middle, first or ending of the word. The substituted words had some part like the original and usually supplied a usable meaning to the sentence.

"Word Pronunciation Tests

The oral reading test is to be used to find out how well the child recognizes words in context. The word pronunciation tests attempt to determine how well he recognizes words when isolated from context clues. Throughout this test his lips moved constantly, though his lip activity had very little relationship to the phonetic values of the letters at which he was looking. Out of 30 words attacked he did not attempt to sound more than 4. He overused initial clues. He was unwilling to risk a guess as to what the words were. In this test he was much more likely to be wrong on the end than on the beginning of the word. His score on this test is that of a late first grade to beginning second grade. John showed an extremely high percentage of reversals on words that could be reversed. It is possible that this may be another evidence of confused laterality.

"When a test similar to the above was used but with auditory presentation, similar difficulties appeared, viz., tendency to reversal whole or part, overuse of beginning of words, excessive errors at the ends of words. The conclusion that his perceptual processes cease to persist long before perception is completed seems justified. This may be:

- 1 habit
- 2 belief that he won't succeed anyway

- 3 a weak perceptual ability
- 4 fatigue due to physical condition
- 5 excessive loss of energy from his inner conflicts.

In order to rule out number 4, his health record should be analysed. The cause is probably made up of 1, 2, 3, 5. Later tests did tend to confirm the belief that his auditory perceptual processes are very poor for a child of his age.

"Visual Perception Techniques

His extremely low performance on these tests also points to low intelligence. However, allowance must be made for a possible hearing defect. He does not clearly associate certain sounds to certain visual symbols. The reverse process is extremely difficult for him.

"Auditory Discrimination

He shows much confusion. Short vowel and weak consonants are lost on him. I don't think I have ever tested a person who showed such weak auditory discrimination.

"Associative Learning Tests

The visual-visual learning tests showed a surprising maturity in view of the poor performance on all other parts of the analysis. He showed visual-visual associative learning abilities equal to a 5th to 8th grader.

His auditory-visual learning tests averaged at about the middle third grade level.

These abilities are fundamental to learning to read and since John possesses them to a satisfactory degree one is encouraged to believe he can read much better than he does at present.

"Memory Span

His memory span is that of a late second grader. This probably can be greatly improved."

On January 26, 1944, John was visited at his school by a speech specialist, Miss Mina

Goossen, from the State Teachers College at Buffalo. The specialist tested and interviewed John and her report, in part, is given below. This report, like the one on his reading difficulties became an important part of John's case study:

"John is laboring under two obvious speech handicaps. Both are functional in nature—primary stuttering and oral inaccuracies, specifically clutterings and substitutions. One interview is not sufficient to ascertain the cause of the first difficulty, though sufficient to ascertain the cause of the second difficulty. However, the child's tremendous urge to talk, and with this desire, the sense of uncertainty that he might not be allowed to finish, or that he might be interrupted, accounts partly for the over-rapid tempo of his speech. Naturally, such a tempo, if continued, would necessitate at times a series of repetitive sounds or syllables—a form of stuttering. Impatience or indifference to his desire for oral expression might be at the root of this great urgency to get over his ideas.

"Delay in correcting defective vision as in John's case might develop an emotional or physical strain which would affect, in turn, the pattern of his speech. Certainly the facial antics, which often accompany stuttering, and nervous movements of the hands are indicative of tension or a certain emotional instability. A favorable indication for improvement is the fact that John is not abnormally conscious or concerned about his speech handicap. Consequently, the tendency for secondary stuttering to develop is less certain.

"Cluttering, which is often allied to a stuttering difficulty, is more noticeable in John's speech than some substitutions. The cluttering, too, is the result of his hurried speech and in John is characterized by omissions, slurring and distortions of sounds and

syllables. Such speech is frequently found in the high-strung, over-stimulated child. The procedures used for the improvement of stuttering would be applicable here.

"Occasional substitutions of sounds occurred, p for b for example. This, however, was not a consistent practice and failure to make a discrimination between m and n in isolated form was evident. In most cases, however, John had no difficulty in imitating these or other sounds in isolation, in syllables or in words when these were given to him in a quiet deliberate manner."

John's health record yielded a few significant clues of his difficulties. He is underweight and is easily tired. His eyes show a deficiency, now corrected by glasses, but these were not secured until 1943, three years after John had entered school. In September 1942 an examination of his ears revealed a hearing loss of nine. The examiner of his hearing also reports that John was very slow in the test.

Visits were made to John's home and interviews were held with both of his parents. Reports of these visits and interviews also became a helpful part of John's case study, but they are omitted from this report.

Once the data were assembled, a plan of action was adopted for John in which he and his parents were asked to cooperate. A brief resumé of the remedial treatment now in progress follows:

As to John's reading difficulties: There was made available for John's use at school an abundance of extremely easy reading material on subjects in which he is interested—animals and aeroplanes. All of this material was on primer or a first grade reading vocabulary level but any markings on the books which indicated this low reading status was blocked out. The teacher began to build a sight vocabulary with a goal of 250 words,

a goal which John understands and takes pride in attaining. Practice in recognizing words is aided by the use of a tachistoscope and John is encouraged to overlearn common words and phrases. Three points, always stressed in beginning reading, are stressed with John. He is constantly reminded (1) to read always from the left to right in an examination of words; (2) to use all parts of a word to determine what it is; and (3) to recognize that each printed word is an exact word and that word only. When John has attained a sight vocabulary of approximately 250 words he will be given phonetic training. To assist John in lengthening his attention and memory span, he is given frequent exercises in carrying out directions, in retelling a story or an incident in sequence, and reorganizing scrambled objects in an orderly arrangement agreed upon.

As to his speech difficulties. In his reading experiences, John is given help in detecting fine visual and auditory distinctions. He is taught where the tongue and lips are when difficult sounds are made very much as pronunciations in a foreign language are taught. The help of his parents has been enlisted and they play games with him at home such as, "I see something that begins with b", etc. John is encouraged both at home and at school to employ easy, deliberate speech. He is encouraged to think of every word in a sentence *before* he says it. Once he begins stuttering, no effort is made to stop him but all of the children, parents, and teachers hear him through. His speech difficulty may be the result of inner conflicts, which have not yet been fully explored but which are receiving more and more attention as his remedial program develops.

As to his health: John has been placed under a stricter regime at school. He is not

allowed to wander at will about the classroom disturbing the other children. Neither is he given two or three directions before he obeys. He is being re-taught to listen for one direction from the teacher and to follow it. He is getting more rest at home and at school, and both parents and the teacher have adopted a more relaxed attitude toward John and his difficulties. Adjustments have been made in his diet and an effort is being made through home cooperation and supplementary feedings at school to bring John's weight up to normal. As a part of the effort to understand his emotional upsets, a study is being made to determine whether or not his hearing loss is psychological or physiological.

Every effort is being made to give John a feeling of security and success in his home and in his school. The children in school take great pride in his progress and applaud every successful step he takes. A few days ago, a college supervisor visited the practice teacher assigned to John's school. No sooner had she entered the school than one of the children came to her and said with great pride, "You ought to hear John read!" The approval of his peers is giving John the status he so badly needs. The old adage that "Nothing succeeds like success" may operate as successfully in improving John's relationship with his schoolmates as it is now helping overcome his hazards of speech and reading.

After three months of remedial treatment, there is encouraging evidence that John is on his way to meeting successfully the difficulties which seemed almost unsurmountable in November. If John is successful he has many people, including himself, to thank. The one to whom he will be probably most indebted will be his teacher, who was interested in John rather than merely in his difficulties.

The Educational Scene

The Bureau of Reference, Research, and Statistics of the Board of Education of the City of New York has published a helpful new pamphlet on *The Place of Reading in the Elementary School Program*. It was prepared by the Division of Instructional Research, under the direction of May Lazar. Among the topics discussed in the pamphlet are "Basic Premises in the Teaching of Reading," "The Functioning of the Reading Program," "Reading and the Classroom Environment," "Some Special Problems in the Teaching of Reading," and "Orienting the School to a Modern Reading Program." A list of selected references is included. The pamphlet is one in a series of educational research bulletins dealing with the subject of reading instruction.

Pi Lambda Theta, the national education association for women, announces two awards of \$400 each for research on professional problems of women, to be granted on or before August 15th, 1945. An unpublished study on any aspect of the professional problems of women may be submitted. Three copies of the final report of the completed research study must be submitted to the Committee on Studies and Awards by July 1, 1945. Information concerning the awards and the form in which the final report must be prepared will be furnished on request by the Chairman of the Committee on Studies and Awards, Miss May Seagoe, of the University of California at Los Angeles.

The Reading Clinic Staff of the School of Education, The Pennsylvania State College, State College, Pennsylvania, is sponsoring two important meetings on reading problems during 1945. The Annual Seminar on Reading Disabilities will be held from January 29 to February 2, 1945. Demonstrations and discussions on a differentiated program for analyzing and typing, or classifying, reading disabilities will be conducted by the Staff of the Reading Analysis Unit of the Reading Clinic. From June 26 to June 29, 1945, the Reading Clinic Staff will conduct the Annual Conference on Reading Instruction. This Conference deals with classroom problems. Copies of the program and information on transportation schedules may be obtained from Miss Betty J.

Haugh, Reading Clinic Secretary. Those desiring college credit, especially Graduate School credit, for the seminar should register in advance with the Director of the Reading Clinic.

The Junior Literary Guild selections for December are: for boys and girls, 6, 7, and 8 years of age, *Uncle Sam's Story Book: Adventures of Yesterday's Boys and Girls*, compiled by Wilhelmina Harper, David McKay, \$2.00; for boys and girls, 9, 10, and 11 years of age, *Bicycle Commandos*, by Wendell Farmer, Doubleday, Doran, \$2.00; for older girls, 12 to 16 years of age, *Treason at the Point*, by J. C. Nolan, Julian Messner, \$2.00; for older boys, 12 to 16 years of age, *Riders of the Gabilans*, by Graham M. Dean, Viking, \$2.00.

Of interest to all teachers and citizens is the publication in recent months of two pamphlets relating to the education of men in the service. The first of these, *Education in the Armed Services*, is published by the Department of Supervision and Curriculum Development of the National Education Association, 1201 Sixteenth Street, N. W., Washington, D. C. Teachers of English will examine particularly the description of the orientation program, and the curriculum and techniques employed in the education of illiterate inductees. The attractively illustrated pamphlet sells for 50 cents . . . The other pamphlet is a new publication of the Educational Policies Commission of the National Education Association and the American Association of School Administrators. It is called, *A Program for the Education of Returning Veterans*. It includes a bibliography and the text of the "G. I. Bill of Rights." Price, 10 cents.

Under the imprint of the University of the State of New York, State Education Department, State of New York, Albany, N. Y., appears a large and well-illustrated pamphlet entitled, *Regents Plan for Postwar Education in the State of New York*. The discussion embraces the elementary and secondary school levels as well as that of adult education.

Be sure to refer to the Council announcement of publications in the advertising section of this issue of the *Review*.

Review and Criticism

TEACHING LANGUAGE IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL¹

[The brief reviews in this issue are by Elizabeth Guilfoile, Jean Gardiner Smith, Elizabeth Williams, Phyllis Fenner, Mabel C. Smith, Bernardine Schmidt, and Dorothy E. Smith.]

This collection of materials is worthy of study by all educators who are interested in the many problems of the teaching of language. The volume might have been more than a collection. But the specialists who wrote the several chapters would have been obliged to work together in a way that the time allotted for the making of yearbooks apparently does not permit.

Fundamental educational principles are stated by Chairman Trabue in the introduction. The implications of child development studies are drawn for language by Dora V. Smith. Broening supplies rich and varied illustrations showing how natural, vivid, and desirable expression grows out of children's activities in genuine situations. Dawson presents and discusses the types of administrative and curricular organization on which the language arts program is currently based.

In his chapter on evaluation Cook points out that "the primary purpose of goals is for use in evaluation rather than as centers for the organization of instruction." It is to be regretted that he did not suggest some desirable procedures. Seegers' chapter on experience, thinking, and learning calls attention to the newer studies in semantics.

Falk's chapter on interpreting the language arts to the community implies a sound and fine understanding of both the language program and of the relationship of the community and the school. She says:

There is no program so effective in securing community support as the comments of parents who are pleased with the

progress made by their children and satisfied with their achievements. Every child, no matter how little he may seem to achieve at school, has a circle of friends and relatives who are eager that he develop and who are potentially the best publicists that the school can have. All other techniques that may be suggested are unimportant when compared with the resolve of the school to achieve for every child his greatest possible development in language.

A detailed and illustrated group of procedures for interpretation is offered. The techniques are such as creative-minded teachers and administrators work out in a functioning and vital school system.

McKee and Durrell each present definite suggestions for the work in the schools. The reader might have expected the outline for program planning to be developed in terms of the contributions of background material. Instead it is presented in terms of detailed analyses of language skills, and the grouping and determination in advance of skills to be taught at given grade levels.

Periodic scrutiny of the school's offering for its effect in bringing about growth in control of necessary skills in communication and expression is part of the evaluation procedure and these chapters, based as they are upon extensive research, contribute to this purpose, although they contribute little to the kind of program planning that the background chapters imply.

¹Forty-third Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education—Part II. By M. R. Trabue, Paul McKee, J. Conrad Seegers, Dora V. Smith, Donald D. Durrell, Mildred A. Dawson, Angela M. Broening, Walter W. Cook, Ethel Mabie Falk, Helen Heffernan, and Louise Abney. Distributed by the Department of Education, University of Chicago. \$2.00.

Analysis of the language arts program in the future will doubtless be more in terms of the learner, and of the nature of his growth and development in language. To quote Trabue:

A teacher of the language arts must have clearly in mind the habits that are essential in speaking and writing effectively, the sequential order in which these habits normally develop, and the types of experience by which growth in each of these habits is normally promoted. She can then study each pupil to discover just which of the desirable language habits he has acquired, stimulate and guide him in those instructional experiences that will help him to develop the additional habits that he needs to acquire next, and thus assist him in making as much progress as is possible for him in the direction of effective expression in English.

An especially concise and helpful chapter entitled "Tools that Facilitate Expression" is made up of well-keyed brief discussions by all the committee members with the addition of articles by Helen Heffernan and Louise Abney.

Had the combination of effort represented in this section gone into its total planning and production this yearbook might have accomplished more than it does for the language program in the elementary school.

Possibly it is the nature of language expression that a theory basic to program building should evolve so slowly. It is those who work daily with the children in the schools who have the burden of synthesis. The findings in child development, in the science of the English language, in the nature of the learning process, in the problems of personality development, must be assembled and studied to see what they contribute to greater understanding of the child's growth in language. The practical worker, that is, the teacher, the supervisor, the principal, has to

translate these materials into the daily job of helping children develop increasing control in, and development through, the use of English in and out of school. She must take into account the developments in all related fields as she works with the language arts, seeking out materials, discovering and perfecting means of helping children. She has to wrestle with general educational philosophy as well as with the problems and nature of the community, and she brings genuine observation and experience to her task.

Such practitioners might get more help and give more help in the task of establishing clear, broad, and fundamental bases for the shaping of the language program in the elementary school. They might get more help if the specialists in the background fields of education brought their findings together and did some group thinking in terms of the offerings of each. They might give more help if their continuous, growing, changing experience with children were more consistently drawn upon in the preparation of such studies as this yearbook.

The shaping of the language arts program will be done in the future probably through determining the educative value of the experiences, the activities, and the materials of the whole school program and how they affect the growth of the pupil in language. It will be more in terms of the long-time development of the child and young adult, his personality needs, his part in practical affairs, and his needs for expression of his ideas and emotions. It will be in terms of maturation and of the understanding of what phases of expression and communication are important to him in the successive stages of his living and experiencing.

This yearbook offers valuable leads into the establishment of such a program through its background materials.

To quote again from Dr. Trabue's introduction:

Oral and written expression are basic tools and materials in the construction of a more satisfactory social and political society as well as of a more effective and satisfying personal life.

ELIZABETH GUILFOILE,
Twelfth District School
Cincinnati, Ohio.

FOR CHILDREN

Giants of China. By Helena Kuo. Illustrated by Woodi Ishmael. Dutton, \$3.00.

From the Empire Builder, Huang Ti, the first historic ruler, down to Dr. SunYat-Sen and Generalissimo and Madame Chiang Kai-Shek, these stories of China's leaders are fascinating. The visions of her great men and women have sometimes made for amazing speed in the nation's evolution, and sometimes have fastened upon the people customs they could not discard after their usefulness was past. Written for young people, this book will also appeal to many adults.

E. G.

Baby Orang and Junior. By Bernard and Katharine Garbutt. Houghton, \$0.85.

A slight story of a little orang and elephant who play together. When the orang tries to follow the elephant into the water, he comes to grief. He is rescued just in time by his mother, who returns him to the safety of the trees. Picture Book. Could be read in second grade.

J. G. S.

The Red Tractor. By Paul Corey. Morrow, \$2.00.

Farm life on the built-up sections of a western state is treated expertly in this teenage novel. The plot is less genuine than the background, but it dramatizes effectively the struggle between the individual farmer and the machine age. The young people, Stan, Dorothy, and Pete, help their parents work out the problems against exciting odds.

E. G.

Corporal Crow. By Margaret Friskey. Pictures by Lucia Patton. McKay, \$1.00.

Inky, the reluctant little crow, received a promotion to corporal because he enlisted

the aid of the chickens in eating the Japanese beetles which were destroying the farmer's corn. The story, which is mediocre both in plot and in quality of writing, seems very written-to-order. Surely, children do not need crows and chickens waving American flags and eating Japanese beetles to give them a sense of responsibility or of patriotism.

J. G. S.

Days and Deeds. By William S. Gray and May Hill Arbuthnot. Scott, Foresman, \$1.20.

This fifth book of the Basic Reader Series continues the high standards of the preceding books with its selection of literary and human interest stories and its excellent format and colorful illustration. Boys and girls will read and enjoy these appealing stories grouped around topics of timely interest: Scientific discovery, citizenship, nature and conservation, historical and geographical backgrounds, stories of fantasy and humor, and "old tales." All are chosen to make reading an enjoyable part of living. Bibliographies following each section are a guide to wider reading.

E. O. W.

Butterfly Takes Command. By Helen Elmira Waite. Illustrated by John C. Wonsetler. Macrae Smith, \$2.00.

The inner workings of a public library, and the evolution of a helpless girl into a confident and capable person will interest Junior



From *Butterfly Takes Command* (Macrae Smith)

High School readers. A little weaving in and out of Nazi spies and plots adds dramatic value.

E. G.

Dog Days. By Katherine Southwick Keeler. Thomas Nelson and Sons, \$1.25.

The story of the Tucker family who go to the country to live, and especially of the three children who crave a dog. What they do day

by day, told with plenty of repetition for the children who are learning to read, and never forgetting that what they want is a dog, makes an unusually nice simple story with humor and slight suspense. P. F.

The Winding River. By Helen Fuller Orton. Drawings by Robert Ball. J. B. Lippincott Co., 1944. \$2.00.

What is true of so many historical stories is true of this one. The historic background is good. I know Mrs. Orton to be a careful workman. But as literature this book has no value. The characters are not real, there is almost no plot, and to me, there is no life in it. The fact that there is little material on this subject, the French settlement Azilum on the Susquehanna River, gives it a certain importance, but I would not feel it a necessary purchase for my library. P. F.

A Tale of Two Houses. By Caroline Dyer. Illustrated by Donald McKay. Whittlesey House, \$1.50.

In this attractive and clever volume sophisticated illustrations and adult irony are mistakenly presented for the use of readers at the picture book stage. It is not suitable for children. E. G.

Speech Reading, Jenna Method. By Anna M. Bunger. The Interstate, \$2.50.

This timely, practical book is highly recommended not only to specialized teachers of speech reading, but also to speech correctionists, psychologists, and all who are professionally concerned with children and adults in any educational capacity. Miss Bunger has put the exact science of speech reading within the reach of all by means of her simple, concise lesson plans and clear explanations.

K. J. S.

Young Willkie. By Alden Hatch. Illustrated with photographs. Harcourt, Brace, 1944. \$2.50.

The life of young Willkie was the life of a normal American youngster of his times. Those were exciting days in Indiana, and the Willkie family had a real part in them. We see young Willkie growing up with a normal boy's love of fun and developing a social consciousness and sense of responsibility. Just as the photographs of him when young closely resemble the man, so does the word picture resemble the man he was. P. F.

Plastics—in the World of Tomorrow. By Captain Burr W. Leyson. Dutton, \$2.50.

This book might be called a career handbook in the field of plastics. The author first points out the career possibilities in the whole field, stressing needed technical training in the engineering and chemical ends of the industry; then the openings for those more interested in the practical applications of the work of chemists and engineers; and finally, the sales field. For those less acquainted in this field, this reviewer wishes the book might have added a chapter devoted to the sources and products from which the chemurgists are fashioning these modern plastics.

M. C. S.

The Magic Monkey. By Plato and Christina Chan. Whittlesey House, 1944. \$1.50.

This is the story of a most unusual monkey. He was a magic monkey, and he had many gifts. He could become invisible. He could fly. He won the magic wand, and with it, did many good deeds, the greatest of which, perhaps, was driving the Demon of Havoc away. This is adapted from an old Chinese legend and illustrated by very unusual pictures by the boy artist, Plato Chan. Carl Glick writes the foreword. The large type and brilliant colored pictures make it a readable book. Not all children will enjoy the story, however, because of its strangeness. P. F.

Elements of Mechanics. By Captain Burr W. Leyson. New York: E. P. Dutton, Inc., 1944. Pp. 176. \$2.50.

This book will appeal not only to the junior and senior high-school boy for whom it is especially suited, but for the general reader as well. It is written in simple, practical style and contains numerous clear and accurate diagrams to further clarify the text. Beginning with a chapter on water wheels and turbines as sources of power, it proceeds to such comprehensive subjects as an analysis of gears, levers, and intermittent motion. B. G. S.

Plain Clothes Patricia. By Mary Urmston. Doubleday, \$2.00.

After reading this book I felt for all the world as if I were holding a mouthful of pins, so absorbed did I become in dressmaking and designing. And I don't like sewing either. Patricia inherited a trunk of materials from her aunt who left a letter saying, "There is a

fortune in this trunk if you are clever enough to find it."

There is the fun of suiting styles to her customers, the excitement of making a wedding dress, and beside the dressmaking problems there is a slight mystery of the man in the dark glasses, and a heartache because Patricia thinks she has lost her old friend Stan. The humor is fine. The people seem very real. Girls will like it, I am sure. P. F.

Walt Disney's Bambi. Adapted from Elix Salten. Retold by Idella Purnell. Illustrated by The Walt Disney Studios. Heath, \$0.88.

As the title suggests, there is rather more of Walt Disney and less of Felix Salten than one who has loved the original Bambi could wish. If a child is not mature enough to read the book as the author wrote it, there is no particular virtue in giving him a written down version such as this. The delicacy and the sensitivity of *Bambi* have gone, and instead we have a sentimental caricature. The vocabulary is not very much easier and it seems a pity that a child should be content with this when by waiting a year or two he could read the book in the more mature writing. J. G. S.

CHILDREN'S POETIC EXPRESSION

(Continued from page 302)

Wing Foot, young man of the Tewa tribe
Longed for the sacred arrow—
Wing Foot, hunting one day,
Saw a buck which would win him the
arrow—
Wing Foot loved animals—He did not
need meat—
He could not shoot the buck—
Never could he have the arrow—
But one chance would the Gods give him.
Sadly he walked back to his tepee—
At night he did not want to sleep—
Finally sleep came—
When he awoke, in his quiver was the
sacred arrow.

Jimmy Arnold

As to the form of verse which children use most successfully, it is very free, without rhyme or metric pattern. Children are not mature enough to put their verse in rigid, especially rhymed, form. Where they attempt to do so, the problem of finding a rhyme is so difficult that they can work only to piece out the rhyme and not to say anything. The attempt to rhyme causes such childish absurdities as:

Roses blowing in the breeze
Never stop to cough or sneeze.

Worse, the attempt to set poems into rigid pattern often results in imitation of what children think are "poetic phrases," rather than actual observation on the part of the child. For example, a fourth-grade girl wrote:

SPRING

The spring! It came one glad morn
And the flowers and trees came back to
adorn.
The wall was covered with flowers
Laden with large rosey bowers.

If she had been encouraged to observe for herself, she might have gone outdoors and have seen something to write about, as did the boy (Joe Castillo) who wrote this:

The mocking bird
Sits on a post
Stretches his neck
And sings a song of joy.

Sincerity, and the use of actual observation and personal experience are the most important things to be encouraged in children's poetry. If these are attained, children will write well for their ages and be prepared to write well when they are older.

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